

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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TAGS: SOPN KS US
SUBJ: PRESS COMMENTARY ON US-ROK RELATIONSHIP

REF: A. SEOUL 10570, B. SEOUL 10703

SUMMARY: DURING WEEK OF DECEMBER 19 SEVERAL MAJOR PAPERS
CARRIED EDITORIALS OR COMMENTS CENTERING ON THE DEC 12 SPEECH
BY AMBASSADOR SNEIDER, AND THE DEC 19 SPEECH BY FONMIN PAK,
(REFTELS). EDITORIALS STRESSED NEED FOR REALISM AND RATIONALITY
IN US-ROK RELATIONS, AND THE GENERALLY NATIONALISTIC CHOSON
ILBO PRAISED AMBASSADOR'S FRANKNESS ON NEED FOR CHANGE
IN RELATIONSHIP. OVERALL TONE POSITIVE. END SUMMARY.

1. HANKUK ILBO 12/21 EDITORIAL CENTERED ON THE NEED FOR
"REALISM" IN DIPLOMACY. CITING EXAMPLES, THE PAPER DESCRIBED
THE U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWAL PLAN AS HAVING "MANY IRRATIONAL
POINTS" BUT STILL BEING "A REALITY." SIMILARLY, IN THE
PAK TONG SON CASE, DESPITE QUESTIONS OF "LEGALITY," IT
WAS SAID TO BE "A REALITY" THAT THE ROKG IS NOW DRAGGED INTO
THIS CASE DIPLOMATICALLY AND POLITICALLY." FINALLY
THE PAPER CITED THE CHANGE IN US-ROK RELATIONS AS A
SLOWLY EMERGING REALITY. EDITORIAL OPINED THAT AFTER
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"5,000 YEARS OF ORDEALS AND TRIALS, THERE IS NO REASON
WHY WE CANNOT BEAR THE HARDSHIPS OF THE LATE 20TH CENTURY."
WHILE PRAISING FONMIN'S SPEECH, THE EDITORIAL QUESTIONED
WHETHER ROK DIPLOMACY HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT IN ACCORD
WITH THESE REALITIES.

2. SEOUL SINMUN DEC 23 FOCUSSED ON SECTION OF FONMIN

SPEECH DEALING WITH THE PAK CASE. IN PARTICULAR, EDITORIAL EMPHASIZED FONMIN'S REMARKS THAT U.S. "PARTISAN POLITICAL INTERESTS AND EMOTIONS" HAVE INFLUENCED HANDLING OF PAK CASE. THE EDITORIAL HOPED THE U.S. CONGRESS WOULD NOT CONNECT COMPENSATORY MEASURES TO PAK CASE AND CALLED FOR A RESOLUTION TO THE CASE "FREE FROM EMOTIONAL INFLUENCE AND IN A WAY SATISFACTORY TO ALL SIDES."

3. CHOSUN ILBO WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT KIM TAE CHUNG IN DEC 23 COLUMN PRAISED AMBASSADOR SNEIDER'S SPEECH AND ATTACKED ITS CRITICS. KIM DESCRIBED SPEECH AS "A VERY FRANK AND CORRECT EVALUATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN ROK AND U.S." KIM ESPECIALLY APPLAUDED THE AMBASSADOR'S "STRESS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF BILATERAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROMOTION OF COMMON INTERESTS OF U.S. AND ROK." KIM EXPRESSED SHOCK AT CRITICISM OF THE SPEECH WHICH HE READ IN THE KOREAN PRESS. IN PARTICULAR HE NOTED THAT SOME OF THE ASSEMBLYMEN WHO CALLED THE AMBASSADOR'S SPEECH "TOO FORWARD" WERE THE SAME ASSEMBLYMEN WHO HAD BEEN ADVOCATING A CHANGE IN US-ROK RELATIONS. KIM CONCLUDED THAT IT WOULD HAVE "EXHIBITED MATURITY" IF THE KOREANS HAD "QUIETLY LISTENED" TO THE AMBASSADOR'S PRESENTATION OF U.S. POLICY.

4. SHINA ILBO DEC 21 EDITORIAL DIRECTLY COMPARED THE SPEECHES OF FONMIN AND AMBASSADOR, TAKING PASSAGES FROM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BOTH. WHILE NOTING THAT THE INTENTIONS OF THE TWO SPEECHES WERE SIMILAR, EDITORIAL CONTRASTED FONMIN'S "CAREFULLY SELECTED DIPLOMATIC RHETORIC" WITH THE AMBASSADOR'S "SURPRISINGLY, FRANK, FORTHRIGHT AND BOLD EXPRESSIONS." EDITORIAL ENDED HOPING FOR THE "STORMS" IN US-ROK RELATIONS TO CLEAR AWAY IN THE NEW YEAR.

5. COMMENT: TONE OF EDITORIALS GENERALLY POSITIVE, STRESSING ACCEPTANCE OF REALITIES IN THE RELATIONSHIP AND HOPES FOR RESOLUTION OF CURRENT DIFFICULTIES. OF PARTICULAR INTEREST IS ATTITUDE OF CHOSUN ILBO, WHICH HAS NORMALLY TENDED TO BE MOST NATIONALISTIC AND CRITICAL OF U.S. AMONG MAJOR SEOUL DAILIES, BUT FROM BEGINNING HAS BEEN NOTICEABLY MORE FAVORABLE THAN OTHERS IN TREATMENT OF AMBASSADOR'S SPEECH. MOREOVER, THE CHOSUN WEEKLY, PUBLISHED BY SAME COMPANY, FEATURED TEXT OF SPEECH AS COVER STORY.
SNEIDER

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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